

A CHEERFUL HOME.

Mark Twain talks of endowing a home for pumped-out humorists.—Current Item.

What deep, opaque, Egyptian gloom,
What thick, lugubrious shades will fall,
Black as the ebon night of doom,
Enshrouding nature with its pall;
What hopeless sighs the air will load,
And rise, like midnight's spectral mist,
From that funereal abode,
From Mark Twain's Home for Humorists.

Ah, there no glad songs beguile
To cheer the day in joy's behalf
And there the sick abortive smile
Will never grow into a laugh.
A laugh that reaches that sad gloom,
Drops dead—no longer it exists—
Drops, like a presidential boom,
In Mark Twain's Home for Humorists.

Oh, castle of facetious Mark!
Upon your portal shall appear
Old Dante's hellish black and dark:
"Leave ye all hope who enter here."
For the doomed souls that cross your stile
Must yield to gloom that none resists,
And sign a contract ne'er to smile,
In Mark Twain's Home for Humorists.

—Tid-Bitt.

CLEANING THEM OUT.

Captain Porter and Lieutenant Farragut Among Cuban Pirates.

Among the reminiscences of sixty years of service in the navy, with which the late Admiral Farragut used occasionally to entertain us "youngsters," was an account of one of his early cruises in the West Indies against the pirates that, even as late as 1823, were very troublesome in those waters. These marauders, the successors of the atrocious "buccaneers," hovered about the smallest and least known harbors, sounds and lagoons along the southern coast of Cuba. They infested also Hayti, Porto Rico and some of the lesser islands. Most of their vessels were small craft of light draught, capable of being propelled, in calm weather, by means of sweeps, or long oars, and of entering shallow bays, inaccessible to the heavy English and American men-of-war. The havoc wrought by them on our commerce in that quarter was considerable.

Our Government therefore fitted out and put in commission a number of light vessels—several of them small schooners and barges—which received the name of the Mosquito Fleet, for the express purpose of ferreting out the freebooters. Some of these small warships received characteristic names; there was the Beagle, the Weasel, the Fox, the Ferret and the Greyhound. The last-named was a schooner of eighty-five tons burden. She was a rapid sailer, and carried for armament one long pivot gun and two eighteen-pounders. The other vessels were of similar tonnage and outfit. Of the barges two had been christened the Mosquito and the Gallinipper, respectively.

Farragut, then a Second Lieutenant and twenty-one years of age, was assigned to the Greyhound, commanded by Captain John Porter. The entire flotilla was under the command of Commodore Porter, with whom young Farragut had served as a midshipman at the early age of ten years on board the famous old frigate Essex. The little fleet of pirate-hunters sailed from New York on the afternoon of the twelfth of February, 1823, with a heavy northeast gale on its quarter. The Greyhound soon became separated from the other vessels, and arrived in the Mona Passage, between Hayti and Porto Rico, twelve days after them.

The delay led to an encounter with a British war-vessel, the commander of which suspected her to be a pirate vessel, sailing under false colors. Captain Porter returned fire when a shot was fired across his bow. At this piece of audacity, the British commander laughingly declared that "no one but a Yankee would have fired like that," and upon finding that his surmise was correct, sent an apology and a present of fruit to Porter.

Quite different was the conduct of the Spanish authorities at the West Indian ports, who had failed to put down piracy in their own waters and were obliged to rely on a foreign Power to do so. As the Fox was entering the harbor of San Juan, she was fired upon from one of the forts, although the American flag was flying conspicuously, and her commander was fatally wounded. For this outrage only a very insincere apology was ever rendered. Moreover, so well warned were the pirates of the whereabouts and movements of the American cruisers that for some months no captures were made.

At length the two barges, Gallinipper and Mosquito, under command of Lieutenant Watson, with crews amounting altogether to thirty-one men, surprised a large piratical schooner on the Cuban coast in a calm. The pirate mounted a nine-pounder brass gun, and carried a well-armed crew of more than sixty men; she was owned and commanded by a noted desperado, who, for his many murders and other acts of atrocity, had received the nickname of "Diabliito," or "Little Satan." Lieutenant Watson, a plucky young officer, had no sooner made out the character of the schooner, than he determined to capture it at all hazards. Accordingly, the two barges advanced to the attack.

Diabliito, confident in the superior numbers of his men, and in his cannon which he had charged with grape-shot, hoisted the black flag of his nefarious

profession, and shouted defiance to the approaching blue-jackets, promising to blow them all out of existence before they could reach the side of his vessel.

The Americans bore down on him with a long, steady pull at their oars—the Mosquito veering off a little from the Gallinipper, so that the threatened discharge of grape might rake only one of them. The piratical schooner lay in seven or eight feet of water and only a few hundred yards off the shore.

The Gallinipper, on her after quarter, had approached within musket-shot, when Diabliito, training his nine-pounder full on the barge, discharged it. But the grape merely cut away some of the oars and wounded two men slightly. The progress of the barge was not even arrested for a moment. With a ringing cheer the men-of-war's men dashed forward, and the smoke of cannon rising, the astonished freebooters beheld the barge darting up under the schooner's stern. Seized with panic, though outnumbering the Americans two to one, they did not wait even to strike a single blow in defense of their ship, but leaped overboard like a flock of sheep and made for the shore.

The marines from the Gallinipper jumped aboard and captured the schooner without resistance; while the Mosquito, pulling rapidly amongst the fugitives in the water, cut them to pieces indiscriminately. About forty of the crew of sixty were killed, and others reached the shore and escaped into the woods. Among the killed was Diabliito himself, who, while swimming for the shore, was recognized by the Spanish pilot of the Mosquito and shot.

The Greyhound and Beagle then went cruising on the south coast of Cuba, through the Jardines and about the Isle of Pines, but found no "sport" until they were in the vicinity of Cape Cruz. This region was reported to be a famous haunt of the pirates, but not a trace of human presence was to be seen from the water. The shore was wooded and seemed to be a mere jungle of thorny chaparral.

The two war-ships anchored within a few hundred yards of the beach, and a boat, under command of Lieutenant Newton, of the Beagle, went ashore to look about, as much in the hope of shooting game as of finding pirates, since the place appeared to be uninhabited. The men were armed as usual; and they had proceeded but a few steps into the woods when a man was observed watching their movements from cover of a thicket. He at once disappeared, and, with wise caution, the men were straightway ordered back to the boat. Hardly had they taken their places when a volley of musketry was discharged at them from the brush. The fire was returned, but with what effect could not be determined, for none of the concealed fusiliers showed themselves; and the numbers of the enemy being unknown, the boat was ordered back to the Beagle.

Night being now at hand, no immediate attempt was made to dislodge the hidden musketeers. But at three o'clock the next morning Lieutenant Farragut was ordered to land with a force of seventeen marines from the Greyhound, and drive the pirates—for there was no doubt as to their character—out of their lurking-places. The two schooners, meantime, were to warp as close to the shore as possible, and protect the attacking party against any possible rush of the enemy in overwhelming numbers.

"It was about as uncertain an errand as I ever set out on," the Admiral used to remark, "for it was still dark, and we had not the least notion of the character of the country inshore, nor yet in what numbers we might unearth the rogues. But as to the nature of the footing we were not long left in doubt. In all my life I had never seen such walking. The chaparral was one jungle of thorn-brush, which tore our clothing to pieces and scratched our flesh at every step. The only way we were able to make any progress whatever was to cut the brush down with our cutlasses. We had literally hewed our way into it for several hundred paces, when we came upon a lagoon, or arm of the sea, too deep to ford, though it was not more than thirty or forty yards in width. We skirted the lagoon for some distance, and at length came out to the mouth of it, where it joined the sea.

"Thus we had accomplished nothing, and were back at the beach again, and as it happened, narrowly escaped being fired on by the Greyhound. For from our appearing in this unexpected place, they at first mistook us for a party of pirates trying to cut us off from the water. Fortunately, just as they were about to give us a charge of grape, the Captain caught sight of the glint of my epaulette in the semi-obscure, and hastily countermanded the order. He then hailed us, and on learning of the state of affairs, sent off the boat to put us across the lagoon.

"Once on the other side, we started to beat into the thickets again, being by this time drenched to our skins, covered with mud, and having our clothing nearly torn off our bodies by the thorns.

"Presently a messenger from the Beagle came up with us and said that the position of the pirates had been discovered at a considerable distance farther along the shore. He brought me orders to make a wide detour in-

land, so as to approach the enemy in the rear, while the two schooners, warped in from the sea and attacked the shoreward side of the stronghold.

"This new plan of attack required us to make a still longer march. We set about it, however, like good boys, and with a will, and in the course of a couple of hours penetrated for a mile or more through the dense jungle. By this time the morning had grown intensely hot. Lieutenant Somerville, who had accompanied me, was seized with sudden nausea and fainted from an attack much like sun-stroke. We were all of us bathed in perspiration and covered with blood, too from our scratched hands, arms and faces. But not one of us had shown the white feather so far; and after a time, having got around to the rear of the place where we supposed the pirates to be posted, I halted my party to wait for the signal-gun from the Greyhound, which I had been told to lay by for. The brush was so dense all about us that we could not see through it for any considerable distance; and we had scarcely sat down in the grass, to wait for the signal-gun, when, on a sudden, we heard a noise in our rear, a cracking, snapping and rustling, as if a large party were coming through the briars.

"It's the pirates! They're coming! They've surrounded us!" was the simultaneous exclamation from nearly every man in the detachment.

"I thought so myself, and instantly gave the order to form in line and make ready. From the noise, the enemy were apparently in overwhelming force. They seemed to be creeping rapidly through the dense chaparral, and in a line several hundred yards in length. I thought to myself that our last hour had surely come. To keep up my own courage, I began a most spirited harangue to my men.

"Stand fast, boys!" I exclaimed. "We can whip 'em. You know they are a lot of sneaks and cowards. Stand fast, aim low, and give 'em cold lead the instant they break through the brush. Then go at them with your cutlasses!"

"I had hardly uttered these brave words, when the foremost of the enemy appeared amongst the briars, not a dozen yards away. At sight of them, a shout rose, then a roar of laughter. The supposed pirates were several thousand huge hand-creaks, tearing through the high grass and briars like a flock of sheep. It is needless to say that I did not continue my speech; in fact, I felt so cheap that I could think of nothing further to say at all befitting the occasion.

"The old marines lay clucking in the grass; and now and then I could hear them exhorting each other to 'aim low,' but I paid no attention to them. We had not lain there much longer, however, before a broadside from the vessels crashed on the still air from the seaward side; and I then had the pleasure of ordering my still smiling command forward to the attack. The rendezvous of the freebooters was about a little landing at the foot of some low bluffs, with irregular, broken ground in the rear, nearly impenetrable by reason of the thorn thickets and rugged ledges.

"The fire from our vessels soon routed them out of their position near the landing place; and immediately we who were coming round in the rear began to get glimpses of the fugitives, some of them carrying great bundles of goods.

"My fellows blazed away at these, but they dodged, doubled and cut away from us by paths in the chaparral that we did not know of; and though we pushed forward as vigorously as we could, we only succeeded in capturing one old fellow with a lame leg, who also proved to be a leper, having large, scaly, white patches of diseased tissue over his entire body. Disdaining to exhibit such a miserable object as my prisoner I bade him go in peace.

"Pushing forward we came upon the crest of a bluff. There, near the landing, yet out of sight from it, being hidden from view on the water side by another crag, we found the stronghold of the pirates, from which they had just run away. Here were several long, low houses, where they lived, remote and concealed from the world. There were many boats, several of them new, and a great quantity of fishing-tackle, as well as sabers, guns and four cannon. While reconnoitering, one of my men discovered a dark hole at the base of the crag. We looked in, and then, to our surprise, found it to be the entrance to an immense cave, full of plunder of all kinds, taken from vessels which the pirates had captured.

"Just as I was entering the cavern, a very large black monkey jumped down from a dark nook in the rocks, and chattering his teeth angrily, disputed by advance. Determined to take at least one reputable prisoner, I seized him by the throat, and for a few moments we had a prodigious struggle. The black brute was almost as strong as a man. He bit me through the arm, but I choked him into submission. He surrendered and behaved very well, offered no further resistance while I bound him with a bit of warp.

"On exploring the cave with torches, we found large number of bales of silks, satins and laces, together with bundles and packages of less expensive fabrics. There was one long tier of saddles of fine workmanship, also har-

nesses and silver-mounted bridles by the dozen.

From the labels on several large cases of cutlery, we concluded that some English merchantman must have fallen recently into their hands. There was property worth many thousand dollars stowed away here, and this was but one of three caves which our men discovered in the immediate vicinity, all of which contained stores of stolen treasure.

We were occupied for three or four hours in transporting the most valuable of the captured property on board the vessels. The remainder of it, together with the houses and maritime outfit, was then burned. It was near night before our task was accomplished, and altogether this had been the most arduous and eventful day of our cruise."—M. A. Phillips, in *Youth's Companion*.

BOOKS THAT SELL.

Price and Fancy Binding the Chief Elements of Literary Success.

"Copyright has a great deal more to do with it than anything else," said a Broadway bookseller when he was asked what kind of books he sold the most. "It is a matter of price, with the average public, I mean. Pirated English works out-sell the books of American writers, because there is no copyright on the English books, and they are accordingly low priced. A new American book will occasionally sell well for a few weeks, but I am talking about average sales. Next to the Bible, Shakespeare and Dickens, the best selling book is Tennyson's poems. There is no copyright and they can be gotten out very cheaply. You can get a first-rate edition of Tennyson for one dollar. After Tennyson in popularity come Thackeray, Walter Scott, Milton, Byron and miscellaneous English poets. The American poets are slow selling, because they are copyrighted and dear. Longfellow is still the best selling American poet, and after him comes Whittier, Bryant, Aldrich and Bret Harte.

"Next to cheapness, gaudy binding seems to be the principal attraction. When the two are joined nearly any sort of a book can be made to go. I remember the experience of a publisher, a friend of mine, that proves the truth of my view. He bought at an auction sale for a song plates of Southey's 'Thalaba' which once formed a part of a complete set of plates of Southey's works. My friend issued an edition of 'Thalaba,' which, you know, is a lurid nightmare which no one understands and no one but the proof-reader has ever read through, bound it in an elaborate and attractive style, and threw it on the market as a holiday gift book at \$1.50. It sold like hot cakes. Of course no one that bought it ever tried to unravel the delicious puzzle the book contained, but it was poetry, it bore the name of a well known author, it was bound in a style that made it a good center-table ornament, it was cheap—and that was enough.

Cooper is the best selling American novelist. The copyright on his books expired long ago. The best selling single work ever written by an American is 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,' which is still protected by a copyright, and which still sells, summer and winter, thirty years after its appearance, as though it was just out. My! my! but there has been money made out of that book. Mrs. Stowe has made more from it than from all her other works together, and three or four publishers have got rich from it.

"The introduction of the cheap paper editions have revolutionized our business, and that of the juvenile book writer as well. A dozen years ago we used to sell thousands of sets every year of books by Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, Jr., Elijah Kellogg and others. Now we very rarely have a call for any thing of the kind. The cheap paper libraries of detective and hunting adventures have driven the other and better books out of the market—the worse for the growing generation's morals. I should say,"—N. Y. Commercial Advertiser.

Witches in Italy.

In spite of the real or feigned ignorance of the leading Italian journals, almost every considerable village in the south possesses a witch who is well known to those who are likely to require her services, though both she and they do their best to keep the educated class in ignorance as to their doings. She is believed to stand in direct connection with the evil one, and acts as if she herself shared the belief. She is regarded by her neighbors with abhorrence, though fear induces them to treat her with an almost servile respect and to send her small presents every now and then. Her clients visit her secretly and she will have no business dealings with any one who is unknown to her unless he is introduced by a friend. Though she is not above the use of hocus-pocus, in many cases she frequently believes in her professions and in the consequences it must entail. She never goes to confession; and when she enters a church the devout view her with suspicion, for they know that she may utter words which will deprive even the mass of its efficacy.—Walford's Antiquarian.

—Mme. Nilsson says that she will sing no more in public, except now and then for charity.

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